



Safeguarding children policy

1. Purpose of the policy

The Park Community Centre is committed to safeguarding practices that help ensure the safety of children whilst taking part in our group activities and in the wider community. This policy helps everyone involved in our group:

- be aware of our legal responsibilities
- understand the safeguarding risks in Any Group
- know what to do if they have a concern about the wellbeing or welfare of any child that comes into contact with our group.

This safeguarding policy, and associated procedures, apply to all individuals involved in The Park Community Centre , including: trustees, members, volunteers, and staff. The policy applies to all concerns about the safety of children while taking part in our group and the activities we run, or while in the wider community.

2. Code of conduct

When working with children we are acting in a position of trust. We recognise that keeping our group safe is everyone's responsibility, and we expect our members, volunteers, staff and trustees to behave according to the following values:

- All children have an equal right to protection from abuse and to be kept safe from harm regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- We recognise some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.
- We listen to and respect everyone in the group.
- We use language that is appropriate for age and ability, and not offensive or discriminatory.
- We encourage a culture of honesty, where everyone feels comfortable to point out attitudes or behaviours they do not like.
- We know it isn't always easy to be vocal about concerns – for ourselves or for other people.

- We ensure that whenever possible there is more than one adult present during activities with children or, if this isn't possible, that we are within sight or hearing of other adults.
- All allegations and suspicions of neglect and abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

This means when working with children, we will never:

- Promise to keep secrets – safeguarding relies on sharing concerns appropriately with other agencies.
- Allow suspicions or allegations of abuse or neglect to go unreported
- Act in a way that is threatening, abusive or bullying
- Jump to conclusions about others without checking facts
- Enter into a sexual or intimate relationship with a child

3. Legislation

The Park Community Centre recognises the importance of Working Together to Safeguard Children. We are committed to working with our local authorities and the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

This policy, and the practices within it, are based on the relevant legislation and guidance seeking to protect children, including:

- The Children Acts 1989 and 2004;
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018

4. Definitions

The Children Act 1989 defines a child as: anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday, even if they are living independently, are a member of the armed forces or are in hospital.

Child abuse happens when a person harms a child. Children may be abused by: family members; friends; people working or volunteering in organisational or community settings; people they know; or strangers.

The types of abuse we need to be aware of are:

- Physical abuse
- Neglect
- Emotional abuse
- Bullying and cyberbullying
- Child sexual exploitation
- Child criminal exploitation
- Child trafficking
- Domestic abuse
- Female genital mutilation
- Grooming

- Historical abuse
- Online abuse
- Radicalisation

5. **Recognising safeguarding concerns**

There are many signs and indicators that may suggest a child is experiencing abuse or neglect. There may be other explanations too, but Anytown Community Group will not ignore any of these signs if they are apparent.

A child may confide (disclose) to a trustee, volunteer, or other member of Anytown Community Group that they are experiencing abuse, inside or outside the activities of the group. Or someone else may notice signs in a particular child.

Different forms of abuse and neglect may have different signs. We will look out for all those listed below.

Physical Abuse

Visible signs

- Injuries to any part of the body
- Children who find it painful to walk, sit down, move their jaws or exhibit other signs of pain
- Injuries which are not typical of the bumps and bruises associated with children's activities
- The regular occurrence of unexplained injuries
- The child who is frequently injured where even apparently reasonable reasons are given

Behavioural signs

- Furtive or secretive behaviour
- Uncharacteristic aggression or withdrawn behaviour
- Compulsive eating or sudden loss of appetite
- The child who suddenly becomes ill co-ordinated
- The child who finds it difficult to stay awake
- The child who is repeatedly absent

What to listen for

- Confused or conflicting explanations about how injuries were sustained
- Evaluate carefully what is said and preferably document it verbatim
- Consider if the explanation is in keeping with the nature and site of the injury

Consider

- What you know about the family?

- Is there a history of known or suspected abuse?
- Has the family been under stress recently?
- Do you have concerns about the family?

Emotional Abuse

Watch for parent/carer behaviours

- Poor attachment with the child
- Unresponsive or neglectful behaviour towards the child's emotional needs
- Persistent negative comments about the child
- Inappropriate or inconsistent developmental expectations of the child
- Parental problems that supersede the needs of the child
- Dysfunctional family relationships, including domestic violence

Watch for child behaviours

- Signs of low self-esteem, unhappiness, fear, distress, anxiety
- Attention seeking, opposing, withdrawn, insecure
- Failure to thrive/faltering growth, delay in achieving developmental, cognitive or educational milestones

Sexual Abuse

There may be no obvious signs of sexual abuse, but the following may be signs that a child is, or has been, sexually abused:

Physical signs

- Signs of blood or discharge on the child's under clothes
- Awkwardness in walking or sitting down
- Tummy pains
- Regression into bed-wetting
- Tiredness

Behavioural signs

- Extreme variations in behaviour (e.g. anxiety or withdrawal)
- Sexually provocative behaviour or knowledge that is incompatible with the child's age or understanding
- Drawings and/or writing that is sexually explicit (this can be an indirect disclosure)
- Direct disclosure; it is important to recognise that young children have neither the experience nor the understanding to be able to make up stories about sexual assault.

Neglect

Physical signs

- Abnormal growth including failure to thrive

- Underweight or obesity
- Recurrent infection
- Unkempt, dirty appearance
- Smelly
- Inadequate/unwashed clothes
- Hunger
- Listlessness

Behavioural signs

- Attachment disorders
- Indiscriminate friendliness
- Poor social relationships
- Poor concentration
- Developmental delays
- Low self-esteem

Environmental signs

- Insufficient food, heating and ventilation at home
- Risk from animals in the household
- Inappropriate sleeping arrangements and inadequate bedding
- Dangerous or hazardous environment

Radicalisation

Behavioural signs

- Becoming isolated from family and friends
- Talking as if from a scripted speech
- Being unwilling to discuss opinions
- A hostile attitude towards others
- Increased levels of anger
- Increased secretiveness, especially around internet use

Bullying / Cyberbullying

Physical signs

- Belongings getting lost or damaged
- Coming home with physical injuries, like unexplained bruises
- Torn clothes

Behavioural signs

- Being afraid to go to school
- Being mysteriously 'ill' each morning
- Skipping school
- Doing less well at school

- Being nervous or losing confidence
- Becoming quiet and withdrawn
- Asking for or stealing money (to give to bullies)
- Problems eating or sleeping
- Bullying other children

FGM (Female Genital Mutilation)

Signs that FGM might happen

- A special occasion or ceremony is going to take place where a girl 'becomes a woman' or is 'prepared for marriage'
- A relative or someone known as a 'cutter' is visiting from abroad
- A girl has an unexpected or long absence from school/regular activities
- A girl runs away – or plans to run away – from home

Behavioural/physical signs that FGM might have taken place

- Difficulty or discomfort walking, standing or sitting
- Complaints of pain between legs
- Spending longer than normal in the bathroom or toilet (due to difficulties urinating)
- Appearing quiet, anxious, or depressed
- Trying to get out of physical education or sporting activities
- Mentioning that someone did something to them that they are not allowed to talk about
- Reluctant to go to the doctors or have routine medical examinations
- Asking for help, but possibly avoiding being explicit about the problem because they're scared or embarrassed
- Acting differently after an absence (e.g. acting withdrawn or bleeding, discharge, urinary infections, clutching their body)

6. Responding to concerns

The Park Community Centre has a designated safeguarding lead whose contact details are in section 11.

The Park Community Centre recognises that it can be difficult for many reasons to speak up if you think a child is being abused or neglected. However, we expect our members, volunteers, trustees, and staff to take action in response to any concerns. Our safeguarding lead will support the person raising the concerns, as well as the child at risk of/experiencing abuse.

If anyone in the group notices any signs of abuse or neglect in a child, they should bring these concerns to the safeguarding lead.

If a child discloses to any adult in the group that they are being abused, the response should be as follows:

- Always make sure the child speaking up feels they are being listened to and supported
- Reassure the child they have done the right thing by telling you
- Emphasise that abuse is never their fault
- Take time, be patient, and let the child go at their own pace
- Don't promise to keep information confidential between you and them. Explain that you need to share the information with someone who will be able to help.
- Tell the designated safeguarding lead about the concerns (unless the safeguarding lead is implicated in causing the harm or perpetrating the abuse. In this situation, information should be shared with a trusted committee member and they will be responsible for taking further action instead of the safeguarding lead)
- Write a clear statement of what you have been told, seen, or heard
- Do not talk to the alleged perpetrator about the child's disclosure, this could make it a lot worse for the child

The designated safeguarding lead is responsible for taking further action once concerns have been raised with them. Throughout the process, the safeguarding lead will record all the information they are given, the actions they take, and why (also see section 7). The procedures they will follow are:

6.1 Initial assessment

As soon as information is shared with the safeguarding lead, they will make an initial assessment of the concern. They will, if possible, talk to the person reporting the concern and gather as much information as possible from them.

If the concern is being raised based on a direct disclosure from a child, the safeguarding lead **will not** question the child or ask them to repeat any details. They may, however, tell the child that they have heard the concerns, reassure the child again that they have done the right thing in disclosing, and tell them what the next steps will be.

Key questions for the safeguarding lead to consider:

- What type of concern has been reported? Different actions are required depending on what type of concern it is (see below)
- What action has already been taken?
- Is anyone else in the organisation affected by this situation (e.g. other volunteers or those you work with)? Are there any attitudes or emotions that you may have to be aware of?
- How might this concern affect what the organisation delivers in the short term?
- Who else might need to be informed?
- What other actions now need to be taken?

6.2 Immediate actions depending on what type of concern has been raised

(a) Emergency incidents: these are when there's a life-threatening situation where there's imminent danger and harm to a child.

- Immediately contact the emergency services if they haven't been called already.

- Make sure the current situation is safe.
- Establish how others are coping – do they need any immediate support?
- Inform the senior people in the group

(b) Protection and welfare concerns: these are when there are suspicions or disclosures that a child is at current risk of, or is experiencing, abuse or harm.

- If the child is at immediate risk, call the police.
- If they are not in immediate danger, but there has been a disclosure from the child, you should make a referral to the local authority safeguarding team (Chad, contact details are in section 11) within 24 hours
- If the child is showing signs (see section 5) but there has not been a direct disclosure, you can consult with the NSPCC Helpline (contact details in section 11) and be guided by them on any further actions

(c) Allegations concerning staff or volunteers: this is when someone has alleged that staff or volunteers from your organisation have harmed or abused a child.

- Contact the local authority safeguarding team (Chad, contact details are in section 11) as soon as possible within 24 hours.
- Be guided by them on any further actions required of you.

(d) Concerns about other organisations: This is a situation where the safeguarding concern is about another organisation, their staff, volunteers or the people they work with.

- As soon as possible within 24 hours contact the designated safeguarding lead of the organisation in question and pass on your concerns, if this has not already happened.
- In some circumstances you may decide to follow up with the organisation to confirm they have acted on the issue.
- If at any point you think the organisation has not acted and someone is at risk, you should contact the local authority safeguarding team yourself.

(e) Supporting those who share a concern with you: Your primary concern should be the best interests of the child who is at risk of harm. However, the person sharing this concern with you may also be distressed by the situation, even if they are reporting on behalf of someone else. Everyone can respond to worries about another differently. If someone has previously experienced trauma they can find it especially upsetting.

- Thank them for bringing this concern to your attention and that they have fulfilled their key responsibility
- Explain that you will now take responsibility in leading management of this concern and any contact with statutory agencies
- Highlight that there may be limited updates that you have or can give them on the situation; that does not mean that it was not important for them to share their concern
- Remind them of the importance of confidentiality and not sharing this information further
- Ensure they have your contact details in case they think of anything else they have not yet shared that they think may be relevant

- Discuss with them what additional support they may require. This may include informing their supervisor that they have dealt with a difficult situation, contacting any employee assistance programme or, if necessary, supporting them to access additional support
- Consider contacting them later to check in on how they are doing

7. Keeping records

The Park Community Centre recognises that it is vital to record and store details about any child protection concerns that arise. We will record information, even if the concerns have not been shared with the police or the local authority safeguarding team. These records are extremely sensitive and will be kept in a locked cabinet or drawer (if hard copy) and/or password protected and stored on a computer with protection against hackers and viruses (if electronic).

It is the responsibility of the designated safeguarding lead to ensure that the following information is recorded about every safeguarding concern:

- The date and time of the incident/disclosure/concern
- The date and time of the report
- The name and role of the person to whom the concern was originally reported and their contact details
- The name and role of the person making the report (if this is different to the above) and their contact details
- The names of all parties who were involved in the incident, including any witnesses
- The name, age and any other relevant information about the child who is the subject of the concern (including information about their parents or carers and any siblings)
- That was said or done and by whom
- Any action taken to look into the matter
- Any further action taken (such as a referral being made)
- The reasons why the organisation decided not to refer those concerns to a statutory agency (if relevant)

Each record will be signed and dated by the person making the report.

8. Confidentiality, consent and information sharing

Timely information sharing is key to keeping children safe and responding appropriately to concerns about their welfare. In general, Weymouth community outreach expects all committee members, volunteers and staff to maintain confidentiality and act in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

Parents/carers are normally the first point of contact for any concerns about a child. If there is a disclosure or suspicion of abuse, however, we will take guidance from the NSPCC Helpline and/or local authority safeguarding team as to whether we should make parents/carers aware of it or whether it should be left to other authorities to speak with the parent/carers.

Whenever The Park Community Centre shares information about a child with any other organisation, we will follow the principles below. We will:

- Have a clear and legitimate purpose
- Keep clear records of why we chose to share the information
- Ensure we are not putting the child at risk by sharing information
- Be as factual as possible
- Seek consent. If the child is deemed old and capable enough, consent should come from them. If not, we will ask their parent/carer, unless doing so would put the child at risk of harm. In any situation where consent is refused, but we believe the information needs to be shared in order to protect the child from significant harm or to promote their welfare, we will seek advice from the NSPCC Helpline. If advised, we will share information with the police and/or local authority safeguarding team without consent.

9. Recruiting and training volunteers

The Park Community Centre volunteers that work with children will be given an induction which covers the safeguarding policy and procedures of the group. They will be trained in: our code of conduct; definitions of abuse and harm; recognising signs of abuse; and how to respond to concerns and disclosures. All volunteers will know who is the designated safeguarding lead, and that they should go to them with any concerns.

The designated safeguarding lead will be offered further training to ensure they are clear about their role, and what action to take in response to different concerns.

We will apply for Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for all volunteers for whom we are legally required to do so.

10. Reviewing policy and procedures

This policy and its procedures will be reviewed every 2 years. They were last reviewed and updated on January 2024

11. Key contacts

The Park Community Centre's Designated Safeguarding Lead Georgia Sugden email
operations@parkcommunitycentre.com

Pan Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership 01305 228866

Children's advice and duty service (chad) 01305 228866

NSPCC Helpline

For adults to call for support or advice about child safeguarding concerns

0808 800 5000

help@nspcc.org.uk

Childline

For children to call for support

0800 1111

24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Useful resources

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) has very thorough guidance on all aspects of safeguarding for voluntary and community groups:

For child safeguarding guidance, the NSPCC has a comprehensive range of guides and tools.

The Charity Commission has guidance on safeguarding for charities and trustees.